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STATE FOR ECA/A/L (JENSON, WALTERS); EUR/PPD (CTEAL)

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SUBJECT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPECIALIST HELPS WRITE TURKEY'S TEXTBOOKS

¶1. SUMMARY: From April 25 to May 20, 2005, English Language Specialist William Smalzer worked in Izmir, Turkey, with the Ministry of Education textbook writers assigned to write the English books for grades 9-11 and for the prep year (before grade 9) for high schools that require entrance examinations. More than six hundred thousand students will be affected annually on a daily basis as a result of the Ministry producing its own English textbooks rather than importing them, saving Turkey USD100 million in foreign exchange. Smalzer reviewed chapters, made substantial revisions, or asked the textbook teams to completely rewrite chapters as necessary. This project has opened up other areas of cooperation between the Embassy and the Ministry of Education, including a nationwide pilot teacher training program to begin in September 2005, and has paved the way for Ministry approval of post's ACCESS program. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Objectives:

a. One of the priorities of the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the past two years was to rewrite the English textbooks for high schools that accept students on the basis of examinations ("Anatolian" high schools, "Super" high schools, high schools emphasizing foreign languages, and private schools). Graduates of these high schools form the educational elite in Turkey. Post worked with the Ministry to develop textbooks that encourage critical thinking, tolerance for other points of view, and knowledge of other cultures, while developing speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills instead of focusing exclusively on grammar instruction. Because students study English full time, Turkey had to import almost USD40 million worth of textbooks for the prep year alone. According to the Deputy Director of Secondary Education, by producing rather than purchasing textbooks, this project will save Turkey almost USD100 million a year in foreign exchange.

b. Over the past year English Language Officer Tom Miller made four trips to Izmir and ELO assistant Aycan Yaman two to work with the textbook teams, while English Language Specialist William Smalzer worked with the teams for two weeks in March and four weeks in April-May. Smalzer and the ELO trained the textbook teams to become materials developers, providing substantial feedback and explaining how to make tasks pedagogically sound. The Ministry postponed the deadline for the textbooks in order to avail itself of Smalzer's expertise and to provide time for the substantial changes in the textbooks both he and ELO Miller recommended. As a result of Smalzer and the ELO's intensive work with the teams, the writers not only corrected mistakes in their English but completely changed the types of texts and exercises they composed. Smalzer and the ELO also consistently emphasized the need to obtain copyright permissions for texts and artwork taken from other sources.

c. The project has attracted high-level MOE attention, as the Assistant Undersecretary of Education and the Director and Deputy Director of Secondary Education flew to Izmir in March to meet with the ELO and Mr. Smalzer and talk to the textbook writers. The ELO has been in regular contact with the Board of Education, which sets national policy in all subjects regarding curricular implications related to this project. The MOE has also requested that the Embassy find Americans to provide voices for recording listening exercises, a task which the British Council performed in the past.

¶3. Results: According to the Deputy Director of Secondary Education, at least 620,000 students will be affected annually on a daily basis by this project. In addition to improving their English, students will be exposed to exercises emphasizing critical thinking, tolerance of other cultures, and will learn about the U.S. as well as other countries. In order to train the teachers to move to communicative language teaching, the Ministry has asked the Embassy to launch pilot year-long teacher training programs in ten provinces next year and if successful to expand to 25 in 2006. The contacts made through this project have helped post set up a nation-wide ACCESS program with the Ministry of Education. On numerous occasions the Ministry has expressed its gratitude for the Embassy's contribution to

this project.

14. MPP Umbrella Theme: Democratic System and Practices

15. Washington support: Julia Walters and Agnes Ashton of ECA/A/L worked closely with Mr. Smalzer and with the ELO to ensure a smooth program.

16. Description of specialist: The author of numerous best-selling textbooks, William Smalzer was the perfect choice to train textbook writers and provide useful feedback. Working long hours on detailed analyses of texts produced by non-native speakers of English, Mr. Smalzer was both demanding and diplomatic, resulting in a much improved series of textbooks.

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